



State of Connecticut

SENATOR KEVIN C. KELLY
SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

21ST DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
300 CAPITOL AVENUE, SUITE 3400
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591
www.SenatorKevinKelly.com

HARTFORD: (860) 240-8800
TOLL FREE: (800) 842-1421
FAX: (860) 240-8306
Kevin.Kelly@cga.ct.gov

Testimony
Veterans' Affairs
Senator Kevin Kelly
Senate Bill 337
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Senator Cabrera, Representative Boyd, Senator Cicarella, Representative Vail and members of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 337 An Act Concerning Federal Veterans' Benefits and Income Eligibility Determinations for Certain Public Assistance Programs.

This bill seeks to remove barriers to public assistance programs for Connecticut veterans.

The proposal would exclude all federal veterans' benefits from income eligibility determinations for certain public assistance programs, such as state Medicare Savings Program, medical assistance, and energy or fuel assistance programs.

Our veterans and their loved ones have sacrificed so much to serve our country, defend our freedoms and protect our way of life. What they earned in benefits from their time in service must not be counted against them or prevent them from obtaining assistance when they are in need.

Veterans are strong. They understand hardship and resiliency. Their experiences also can put them more at risk for future hardship. Homelessness, mental health issues, and obstacles in finding a role in the civilian workforce are serious problems amongst veterans that could lead to veterans falling on hard times. If a veteran and their family find themselves struggling financially to pay for something like fuel or to obtain needed medical care, they must not be excluded from eligibility from the existing state assistance programs simply because their veterans' benefits are counted as income. The benefits veterans do get as a result of their selfless service must never become a barrier to assistance when a veteran is struggling.

I thank the Committee for raising this bill and allowing me the opportunity to testify in strong support.